

**ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

MOBILE, August 29, 2005 – Officials with the Alabama Department of Transportation have closed the Cochrane-Africatown USA Bridge along U.S. 98 in Mobile County until they can conduct a structural assessment for possible damage that may have been caused when the bridge was struck by an oil drilling platform that had broken free in Mobile Bay.

ALDOT officials have no word on exactly where the oil drilling platform came from, but sometime shortly after 11 a.m. it apparently broke away from its moorings in Mobile Bay and drifted north until it became jammed under the west end of the bridge's main span.

The bridge will remain closed until ALDOT engineers can conduct an inspection. There is no definitive word as of 1 p.m. whether the bridge has sustained damage, but crews will be en route to the bridge as soon as safe travel is possible.

The bridge is the route used for hazardous material to bypass the Wallace Tunnel on Interstate 10. Trucks carrying hazardous material are being detoured up Interstate 65 to Alabama 59 to bypass the closed bridge.